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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, February 19, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Menus From the Pantry Shelf." Information from Bureau of Home Economics

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Poets have written many pretty lines about hospitality and the generous heart. We've all heard about the home where the latch-string is always out and where there's always room for one or a dozen more at the table. Yes, and we've all heard the perfect wife described in glowing terms -- the little wife who always looks like a spring flower yet can serve a fine meal to any number of her husband's friends on a moment's notice with no fuss and flurry either.

Well, the poets are right as far as they go. Perfect last-minute hospitality does require a generous heart, but that's just a start. It also requires good advance planning and good management in the preparation. The perfect little wife we've all heard about can be as friendly and hospitable as the story makes her, she can welcome her unexpected guests with a warm smile and a hearty hand-shake and so on, but she needs a well-stocked pantry and some clearly laid meal plans to back up that cordial manner. The failure-proof hostess must be ready to dispense food in an easy friendly fashion at almost any hour. This isn't just a knack; it's chiefly good planning.

The old saying about haste and waste won't come true if you plan in advance for haste. One way to do that is to sit down calmly some morning and write out several menus that you could get together in double-quick time. A friend of mine has a series of what she calls pinch-hitting menus tacked up on the back of her kitchen cabinet door. She has plans for quick dinners, for a last-minute lunch, for a hasty tea, and a late evening snack. Her meal plans feature food that she can take off her pantry shelf. Usually when folks drop in on you and you want to serve them a whole meal or a lunch in a hurry, well, on occasions like that you don't have time to sit down and make out a market list and then go shopping. You have to get something together from the supplies you have on hand. And that requires a well-stocked pantry to back up your menus.

I've had two letters in one week asking about the proper supplies for an emergency shelf. One of these requests came from a lady in North Dakota and one from a friend in New Mexico. Which just goes to prove that housekeepers, whether they're up north in the ice and snow or down south in the warm desert sand, have a lot of the same problems. This chat today is in reply to these two requests. But please let me say in advance that this list of emergency-shelf provisions is just a suggestion. No two families will want exactly the same supplies. You have to consider the limitations of the food budget and the likes and dislikes of your family.

In this list, of course, I'm going to omit the staples. This emergency shelf is for specialties, not for the supplies you have on hand in the kitchen all the time. Which just means that I'm not going to list flour and salt and pepper and oil and vinegar and so on. I'm going to concentrate on the foods that you can heat and serve in a jiffy for the unexpected occasion.

First, let's consider the main dish -- the protein part of your emergency meal. Well, the pantry-shelf supplies for this may be canned meat, fish or chicken. Deviled ham, corned beef, sausages and other meats in cans are possibilities. If by any chance you put up your own chicken, be sure to keep several cans ready on your quick-meal shelf. You can treat your company to chicken and biscuits, or chicken a la king on toast when they drop in. Creamed salmon or tuna fish makes a hot, welcome, and quick dish for your meal. So put some canned fish on the list. And you'd better add a package of dried beef and one of bacon.

So much for the meats. Another protein food we ought to mention in connection with the main dish is cheese. Don't fail to list cheese among your supplies. With cheese on hand you can serve your guests hot toasted cheese sandwiches, Welsh rabbit, or one of those good one-dish combinations like spaghetti, tomatoes and cheese.

Which reminds me that for the starch part of the meal you'd better keep on hand some rice or macaroni or spaghetti. You know, they cook in about 20 minutes in boiling water.

Then, in case your refrigerator is low in fresh milk, or a storm delays the milkman, keep some canned milk on hand. You'll probably always have eggs in your refrigerator. I'd just like to mention in passing that they're invaluable when you're getting up a quick meal. But of course they don't properly belong on the pantry shelf we're talking about.

The next consideration is vegetables -- canned of course. Maybe you put up your own vegetables, or maybe you buy them. Whichever you do, keep a variety on your shelf. Be sure to have several cans of tomatoes and some canned tomato juice. You'll probably use these more than any other vegetables. Then you'll want cans of corn and peas and beans and so on. Better be sure of a collection that will combine to make a good vegetable salad. Speaking of salads, makes me think of the refrigerator again. When you make French dressing or mayonnaise, make it in generous amounts and keep a supply on hand in the refrigerator. Many people have salad greens, washed and crisp, in the refrigerator most of the time. They come in extra handy when company drops in.

For salads or appetizers, but especially for quick desserts, canned and dried fruits belong on your list. Yes, and jellies and jams. You'll also find relishes handy -- your own pickles and spiced fruits or those in jars from the grocery. Then for the dessert course, you'll also want your cookie jar kept full. By the way, some people like made-up-in-advance chocolate sauce to use for making cocoa or desserts.

Well, now, there's the list just as a general suggestion. You can add other items to suit your own taste. Have I forgotten anything, I wonder. That's right. I left out two useful things. Crackers -- plain and salted. Always necessary on an emergency shelf. And canned soup. Another more-than-handy item.

Here's an easy pantry shelf dinner. I'll venture to say that you can get this on the table in a half hour any time. Clear tomato soup or chilled tomato cocktail; Cheese crackers; Creamed chicken in rice ring; Combination vegetable salad from fresh or canned vegetables, whichever you have on hand; Canned fruit and cookies; Coffee.

